

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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In These Pages

10th Church School Assembly	1
Japan Lutheran Church Approves Union Time-Table	2
Tokyo Christian Crusade	2
Agape Factory	3
AVACO News Release	4

TENTH CHURCH SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

One of the most disturbing realities in the Christian program in Japan is the gradual decrease in Church School attendance. For the past five years statistics reveal a steady decline in the number of students. Some areas report only 10 students.

At the Japan NCC Church School Department sponsored Church School Conference held at Nagoya on May 3 - 4 under the main theme of "Christian Education in a Time of Rapid Change," this phenomenon of decreasing attendance received intense study. Four hundred eighty-five registered for the conference but actually more than 500 attended.

Many outside influences, contributing to the decrease in attendance, were noted in the panel and group discussions: The scheduling of interesting TV programs at the same hour as Church School naturally tends to cut down on the attendance. Public schools also, use Sunday as a day for special school activities. Students find Sunday to be the only day for their private lessons in drawing, penmanship, ballet, flower arrangement, tea ceremony and abacus. Another outside factor is the great emphasis put on entrance tests in the Japanese educational system and the subsequent feeling that there is no time for Church School. The general attitude of educational institutions toward religions is usually

that of indifference or even of antagonism; the inclination is toward materialism and the belief that science will give all the answers. The present educational system has no moral basis which has aided in the development of many young people who have no interest in "ultimate" questions. And then, there is no "religious atmosphere", the shrines are only for festivals and Buddhism for funerals. The fact that Christians are, numerically, an insignificant minority and that religious people are usually not thought of highly make the Church School a rather unimportant place in the eyes of the people.

However according to Rev. Yoshio Kimura, Executive Secretary of the NCC Church School Dept., the consensus at the conference, was that basic causes for the decline were to be found within the Church School. It is not attractive to the young people. The language used by the teachers who are usually following a fixed curriculum is "church language" which is not understood by the youngsters. Also, besides a lack of feeling of having been called to teach, the majority of the teachers have not had basic training in teaching fundamentals. Often, due to the failure of the teacher to cope with the situation, the young people fail to return. Subsequently, the pressing need for an adequate teacher's training program has been recognized and it has been decided to raise one million yen within Japan to help initiate a good teacher's training movement.

JAPAN LUTHERAN CHURCH APPROVES UNION TIME-TABLE

At its 38th Annual Convention, the Japan Lutheran Church approved unanimously the time-table decided on by the Constituting Committee (see March 15 issue) at Kobe on March 6 - 7 which calls for a "meeting of declaration to unite" on November 23, 1961 and the holding of the Constituting Convention of the proposed united church by Reformation Day, 1962. Two committees were also organized to make various interior adjustments and preparations for the coming "meeting of declaration to unite" and to make preparations from there to the time of the Constituting Convention. Concrete policy and arrangements will be decided at a meeting of a standing committee in June.

Election of officials was also held. Dr. Chitose Kishi was reelected president, Rokuro Yamanouchi-vice-president, Makoto Tsuboki-Recording Secretary and Saburo Inoue-Treasurer,

TOKYO CHRISTIAN CRUSADE

The Tokyo Christian Crusade, which opened as scheduled on May 6, notwithstanding opposition concerning method of evangelism and questions concerning the constitutionality of the Crusade's use of a public recreational facility for its meetings, completed the first week of its contracted thirty-day stand at the large - 10,000 capacity - Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium. An arch in front of the auditorium announces this to be the site of "Wonderful Music and the World's Greatest Message."

Crowds varying from about 4,000 on week-days to 8,000 on weekend evenings (Crusade news releases report an estimated 38,000 for the first week) have been privileged to hear a 700 - 800 voice

choir accompanied by an 80 piece orchestra under the direction of Ralph Carmichael. Brilliant soloists have also thrilled the audiences. Bob Pierce of World Vision presents the message each evening, followed by the usual evangelistic invitation.

A total of 1484 responded to Dr. Pierce's invitation during the first week. Of these 45 per cent made "definite profession of faith in Christ as Saviour" and about 40 per cent were listed as "seekers." The Tokyo Crusade Office had hoped for 1,000 converts a day. Crusade officials believe that the opposition to the Crusade "took some toll."

AGAPE FACTORY

Even though the general economic situation of a country improves, there always exist certain areas or groups of people who are left behind. The physically handicapped are one of these groups in spite of laws to accelerate employment and other advances in social security.

There are approximately one million physically handicapped people in Japan. Half of these are responsible for the main source of income in their respective families. However, among these, 62 per cent of the men and 97 per cent of the women receive a salary of less than 10,000 yen.

In the past, Japan Church World Service (JCWS) has aided the handicapped by providing medical camps, recreation, a tape library for the blind and financial loans, to the extent that it has received a commendation from the Labor Ministry. There is no doubt, however, that the best way to meet the needs of the handicapped is to provide them with jobs.

As a new form of Christian service, JCWS has established a card-board factory which employs physically handicapped people. The factory has been named the "Agape Factory." A small building in the suburbs of Tokyo which formerly housed a noodle factory has been purchased and repaired to install the necessary cutters and rollers which have been adjusted to meet the needs of the handicapped workers.

From 70 applicants, 17 (15 men and 2 women) were initially selected with plans to eventually increase the number to 30. Of these 17, 50 per cent had never had work before because of their physical condition, and the others had been working under antiquated and often inhuman conditions. Within three months the directors of the factory expect to be able to pay an adequate salary to 25 handicapped workers as well as meet all other expenses, all work a regular 8 hours day.

The "Agape Factory" has drawn the attention of the public. It has been televised twice, featured on a 15 minutes radio broadcast and written up by leading newspapers.

AVACO NEWS RELEASE

New AVACO Officers Elected

On April 25, at the first meeting of the newly-selected AVACO Board of Directors, six officers and four committee chairmen were elected. Bishop Augustine T. Takase was reelected as Chairman. In addition, Mathew S. Ogawa, Executive Director, was re-employed for his sixth consecutive two-year term.

The other officers and committee chairmen are as follows:

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| Vice chairman | - | Rev. Robert Bruns
(Kyodan missionary) |
| Treasurers | - | Rev. Tsunetaro Miyakoda
(Japan Bible Society) |
| | - | Mrs. Darley Downs
(Kyodan missionary) |
| Secretaries | - | Rev. Yoshio Kimura
(Christian Kindergarten Association) |
| | - | Rev. Alexander Meyer
(Lutheran missionary) |
| Broadcasting
Chairman | - | Rev. Takihiro Yamakita
(Kyodan) |
| Television Chairman | - | Rev. James A. McAlpine
(Southern Presbyterian missionary) |
| Projected Materials
Chairman | - | Rev. Atsumi Tasaka
(Lutheran Church) |
| Drama (Non-
projected) Committee Chairman | - | Rev. Sumiko Ono
(Baptist Church) |

These officers, with the addition of three members-at-large, Rev. Ken Saeki (Kyodan), Rev. Sadahiko Kojima (Aoyama Gakuin University) and Rev. Keitaro Nishimura (Japan Anglo-Episcopal Church), make up the Executive Committee, which meets each month.

Summer Workshop Schedule Decided

At the first meeting of the newly-selected Executive Committee of AVACO on May 10, the following workshop schedule was approved:

- 12th annual national AVACO workshop
- July 25-28, at Naka-Karuizawa, 450 attendants
- Kansai Area Workshop, August 1-4
- Kyushu Area Workshop, August 1-4
- Hokkaido Area Workshop, August 1-3
- Hokkaido (HOREMCO) Radio Workshop, July 17
- Anglo-Episcopal Church Kindergarten
- Training Workshop, July 24

The Kansai, Kyushu and Hokkaido area workshops are being administered this year by the NCC Church School Department, and AVACO

will send leaders. The AVACO annual national workshop this year is held jointly with the Church School Department, with AVACO administering the conference and the CSD providing leadership. AVACO is only providing leadership in the case of the last two listed above.

Annual Christian Radio Exchange Held

On April 13 and 14 AVACO played host at the Christian Audio Visual Center to the fifth annual meeting of Christian broadcasters of Japan, for the purpose of exchanging information and ideas. On the first day, lectures on the present situation and trends in radio and television in Japan were heard from representatives of the government broadcasting company (NHK) and the Private Broadcasters Association. In the afternoon there were brief presentations by radio producers on their work, followed by discussion. The second day was given over wholly to listening to one or two tapes of each of the more than twenty Christian programs now being produced in Japan by twelve different agencies. Approximately thirty, representing eleven groups, attended.

AVACO Publication Schedule Set

In a few weeks the first of a series of audio-visual handbooks, published by AVACO in the Japanese language, will come off the press. The first will be entitled The Production and Use of the Flannel-graph. The second, entitled The Production and Use of the Picture Story (Ebanashi), is to be in print in time for use in summer workshops. Profusely illustrated with pictures and line drawings, this series should be the most practical and useful material in print in Japanese. It is planned that those having wider usefulness will also be made available in an English edition for use in other countries. Besides other technical manuals the series will include one on the use of audio-visuals in the church school and a manual on film evangelism. Three to four booklets a year will be published over the next several years.

These publications parallel and supplement the three a year series of audio-visual manuals related to the NCC school curriculum which has replaced AVACO's monthly magazine.

(by Rev. Vern Rossman)

